

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL, FEBRUARY 9: GREECE

1. SUMMARY: AT THEIR COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN BRUSSELS ON FEBRUARY 9, THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS GAVE THEIR FORMAL AGREEMENT TO THE GREEK APPLICATION FOR EC MEMBERSHIP. THE MINISTERS REJECTED THE PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION AND DETERMINED THAT THE GREEK APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP WOULD BE HANDLED IN THE PATTERN ESTABLISHED WHEN THE COMMUNITY WAS ENLARGED FROM SIX TO NINE MEMBERS. END SUMMARY.

2. GREECE: DURING THE RESTRICTED PORTION OF THE COUNCIL MEETING, THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS RECEIVED AND DISCUSSED THE COMMISSION'S "OPINION" ON GREEK ACCESSION. FOLLOWING THEIR DISCUSSIONS, THE MINISTERS ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT TAKING NOTE OF THE COMMISSION'S OPINION, AS REQUIRED BY THE TREATY, AND GIVING THEIR FORMAL AGREEMENT TO THE GREEK APPLICATION. THE MINISTERS, HOWEVER, REJECTED THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSED PRE-ACCESSION

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PERIOD, STATING CATEGORICALLY THAT GREEK ACCESSION WOULD PROCEED

ALONG THE PATTERN ESTABLISHED WHEN THE COMMUNITY WAS ENLARGED FROM SIX TO NINE MEMBERS.

3. AT A PRESS BRIEFING FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL, COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND LUXEMBOURG FOREIGN MINISTER THORN EMPHASIZED THAT THE DROPPING OF THE PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD WOULD NOT MEAN A REDUCTION IN AID TO GREECE, SAYING IT REMAINED THE COMMUNITY'S DESIRE TO SEE GREECE BECOME A FULL MEMBER WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLE DELAY. THORN SAID THAT NO DATE HAD BEEN SET AS YET FOR THE BEGINNING OF NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS WOULD BE THE DRAFTING BY THE COMMISSION, FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL, OF THE COMMUNITY'S POSITIONS FOR THE ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS. WHEN PRESSED AS TO HOW LONG THIS MIGHT BE, THORN GAVE HIS "PERSONAL ESTIMATE" OF ABOUT SIX MONTHS. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THE COUNCIL'S ACTION MEANT THAT GREECE WOULD BECOME A FULL MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY WITHIN THIS DECADE, THORN RESPONDED THAT, IF HIS COLLEAGUES HAD NOT THOUGHT THAT, THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THIS DECISION. THORN EMPHASIZED THAT NO POLITICAL PRECONDITIONS WOULD BE IMPOSED UPON GREECE AND THAT, WHILE THE COMMUNITY WAS SYMPATHETIC TO THE PROBLEMS EXISTING BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY, THESE PROBLEMS WOULD NOT INFLUENCE, IN ANY WAY, GREEK ACCESSION. THORN FURTHER SAID THAT THE MINISTERS DID NOT DISCUSS THAT PORTION OF THE COMMISSION'S OPINION WHICH PROPOSED THE DEEPENING OF POLITICAL CONTACTS BETWEEN GREECE AND THE COMMUNITY IN ADVANCE OF ACCESSION. THORN EMPHASIZED THE EXISTING EC-GREECE ASSOCIATION MECHANISMS AND THE FREQUENT CONTACTS WHICH TAKE PLACE BETWEEN VARIOUS MEMBER STATES IN THE GREEK GOVERNMENT. THESE, HE THOUGHT, WOULD BE SATISFACTORY AND THAT NO SUPPLEMENTARY CONTACTS WERE NEEDED. SPEAKING WITH A MISSION OFFICER FOLLOWING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, THORN SUMMED UP THE COMMUNITY POSITION BY SAYING IT WAS THE COMMUNITY'S INTENTION TO TELL THE GREEKS THAT THEY COULD BECOME POLITICALLY ALIGNED WITH THE COMMUNITY "WHEN THEY WANT" AND ECONOMICALLY ALIGNED "WHEN THEY CAN."

4. COMMENT: THE COUNCIL DECISION TO APPROVE THE GREEK APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE AGREEMENT PREVIOUSLY REACHED BETWEEN THE EC AND GREECE WHEREBY GREECE WILL NOT BE ABLE, BY VIRTUE OF ITS MEMBERSHIP, TO EXERCISE A VETO OVER THE TURKISH APPLICATION. HOW GREEK MEMBERSHIP WILL EFFECT THE COMMUNITY'S POLITICAL COOPERATION EFFORTS REGARDING CYPRUS HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED ALTHOUGH MOST OBSERVERS HERE CONTINUE TO CLING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO THE HOPE THAT THE CYPRUS PROBLEM WILL HAVE BEEN RESOLVED BY THAT TIME. MORRIS

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